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Article

South African Studio Pottery of the Later Twentieth Century and Its Anglo-Oriental Epithet

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Abstract

South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century has consistently been described as "Anglo-Oriental" because it was perceived to adhere to the standard forms of utilitarian wares as promoted by the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery. This article investigates the validity of such an epithet, based on evidence that the pioneer South African studio potters and their successors were exposed to broader pottery influences, and that their oeuvres reflected what they borrowed, adapted and re-interpreted from such influences. The careers of South Africa's pioneer studio potters and some of the second generation of studio potters are investigated. The finding is that South African studio pottery of that period was an expression of mostly utilitarian pottery forms reflecting many influences but not dominated by any single pottery tradition. The term "Anglo-Oriental" is useful if used judiciously to describe the aesthetics and ethics of some, but not all, South African studio potters of the later twentieth century. The article further explores whether the era's studio potters contributed towards the creation of a distinctive South African pottery identity and presents the finding that at best, the collective character of the studio pottery can be considered expansive rather than geographic- or culture-specific.

Keywords: Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery; craft pottery; pottery ethics and aesthetics; South African ceramics; South African studio pottery; utilitarian pottery

Introduction

This article engages with the individual and collective oeuvres of South African studio potters of the later twentieth century. The article has three objectives: The first is to establish to what extent the pioneer generation of studio potters followed the precepts and practices of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery. The second is to identify and qualify other influences which shaped the ethics and aesthetics of

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the pioneer generation and their twentieth-century successors. The third objective is to consider whether a distinctive South African studio pottery identity resulted from an entanglement of influences.

The post-modernist art history approach recognises that the artwork/artefact can be "read" as having agency to generate and gain meanings about what it constitutes in context of its culture, history and prevailing values. This approach is of particular relevance in the study of studio pottery and even more so in utilitarian studio pottery, which was a dominant genre in the later twentieth century in South Africa. I favour the theoretical perspective that material culture must be read as "entangled narratives" of makers and users amidst prevailing circumstances and values. This perspective borrows from current archaeological meta-methodology. From archaeological and anthropological viewpoints, the object in material culture is acknowledged as an embodiment of itself, its time and its society, beyond its obvious functional form and usage (Hodder 2012). The object is therefore not understood merely to be that which its outward form and function suggest, but in fact, all that it represents and reflects. An investigation into South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century must therefore consider the studio potters themselves, the scope of their output and the broad range of values associated with those works.

The era under discussion is the "later twentieth century" beginning in 1952, when the pioneer studio potter Esias Bosch (1923–2010) commenced producing studio pottery in South Africa, to the end of the twentieth century, by which time only a few stalwart studio potters continued to ply their craft. By definition, a "studio potter" is a person who practises pottery as a professional or semi-professional career; operates and manages an independent studio pottery, or has a dedicated pottery studio; primarily specialises in utilitarian ware but also produces one-off pieces which could be considered ornamental, sculptural, environmental or architectural; and whose personal oeuvre has achieved a distinctive style.[1] This definition borrows in part from the published writings of Bernard Leach (1887–1979) and Sōetsu Yanagi (1889–1961) (Leach 1940; Yanagi 1972). Leach was the founding father of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery that gained shape in the 1920s, and which laid the foundations for a specific approach to materials, processes, forms, ethics and aesthetics. Yanagi was the driving force behind *mingei*, the Japanese folk craft movement that arose in the 1920s, from which the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery borrowed some aesthetic and ethical tenets.

With so much emphasis placed on the "Anglo-Oriental" roots of South African studio pottery, the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery and its ethics and aesthetics require clarification. In brief, it entailed the tenets of involvement and control by the potter in every stage of production, the perfection of form by means of repetitive work,

1 Studio pottery in South Africa stands distinct from production pottery studio which is geared towards mass-production of utilitarian wares (whether as user wares or as ornamental wares) and the community-based potteries which for the greater part addressed the development of craft output for the tourism market.

and an output of simple but pleasing forms of primarily utilitarian ware. Those tenets were also shaped by the concept of hand-crafted wares for everyday use, as embodied in *mingei*.

The Rise of the Anglo-Oriental Tradition of Studio Pottery—Its Character and Scope of Influence

Leach spent the years 1910 to 1920 in Japan, and during that time, cultivated an appreciation for Japanese concepts of art and beauty. He studied traditional Japanese pottery and on his return to England, and with the help of his Japanese potter-friend Hamada, Leach established a workshop at St. Ives in Cornwall. During the initial years of production, Leach specialised in creating a range of slip-decorated, domestic earthenware and alongside those, pieces inspired by the demure, harmonious shapes and monochrome glazes (Watson 1993,18; Vurovecz 2008, 16) of Chinese stoneware of the Tang and Song dynasties (Watson 1993, 19). Leach aspired to fuse the Eastern aesthetics of form and decoration with English practicality (Lewenstein and Cooper 1974, 16–17) or, as described by the British studio pottery art historian Jeffrey Jones (2007, 81), to hold "the exotic Eastern and the indigenous English […] in a creative tension which gave opportunities for a playful crossover of techniques, styles and sensibilities."

Within the span of three decades, Leach's vision of a specific approach to materials, processes, forms, ethics and aesthetics had gathered a substantial following amongst English potters and this became known as the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery. By the middle of the twentieth century, studio potteries as far afield as the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand were producing pottery in which, according to Australian studio pottery art historian Damon Moon (2008, n.p.), individual expression was so deeply obscured that "one couldn't tell whether a faceted celadon[2] glazed jar was made in Melbourne or London."

In the years after World War II, the teaching of craft pottery flourished in England's art schools and colleges, with some institutions leaning towards the aesthetics of the Anglo-Oriental tradition and others favouring the modern ceramics, of which the British studio potters Lucie Rie (1902–1995) and Hans Coper (1920–1981) were the leading proponents. The stage for their styles was set by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), who started in 1946 to create pottery in a hitherto unknown idiom. In the 1960s, the English art schools and colleges and in particular the Central School of Art and Design in London, shifted their focus from teaching pottery as craft practice to the encouragement of individual creativity in the "investigation of form, material and captured movement" (Watson 1993, 30), which translated into the "vessel" that stood opposite to the pot.

The English studio potters who built on the Leach-Hamada foundation, and to various degrees perpetuated the Anglo-Oriental tradition, included Michael Cardew

2 Celadon is a transparent glaze in various hues of jade colour (Rhodes 1973, 266).

(1901–1983), at his original Winchcombe studio, and his later studios at Wenford Bridge, Cornwall and Abuja, Nigeria; Raymond Finch (1914–2012) at Winchcombe and Kenneth Quick (1931–1963) at the Tregenna Hill Pottery, Cornwall. The American Warren MacKenzie, the Australian Harold Hughan (1893–1987) and Peter Stichbury (1924–2015) in New Zealand, would come to be acknowledged as the leading studio potters in the Anglo-Oriental tradition outside England.

Leach had grown critical of the standard of studio pottery in the post-World War II years and thought that the craft was "suffering from aesthetic indigestion" (Leach 1978, 238). During 1953, Leach, Hamada and Yanagi visited the United States of America on an extended tour, where Leach argued that American artist-potters were over-intellectualising and failed in the effort to integrate elements of the world's best traditions into an evolved American tradition (Diffendal 1952, 54–56). For Leach, the blending of the pottery traditions of the East and the West was "a question of marriage, not prostitution. […] Can the free-form geometry of the post-industrial era assimilate with organic humanism of the pre-industrial?" (Cooper n.d.).

The Pioneers of South African Studio Pottery: Esias Bosch, Hyme Rabinowitz and Bryan Haden

Bosch (Figure 1), Rabinowitz (Figure 2) and Haden (Figure 3) are the acknowledged pioneers of South African studio pottery. It can be argued that they were influenced to a greater extent by the philosophy and work of Cardew than by that of Leach. Both Bosch and Rabinowitz had direct contact and work experience with Cardew. Haden (2010) identified Leach, Cardew and in particular a contemporary studio potter of Cardew, Harry Davis (1910–1986) of Crowan Pottery, as having "significantly influenced [my] own approach to pottery." Bosch, too, did not withhold his admiration for Davis, speaking of him as "the most complete potter," when compared with Leach, Cardew and Finch (Anton Bosch, Email message to author, August 5, 2016).

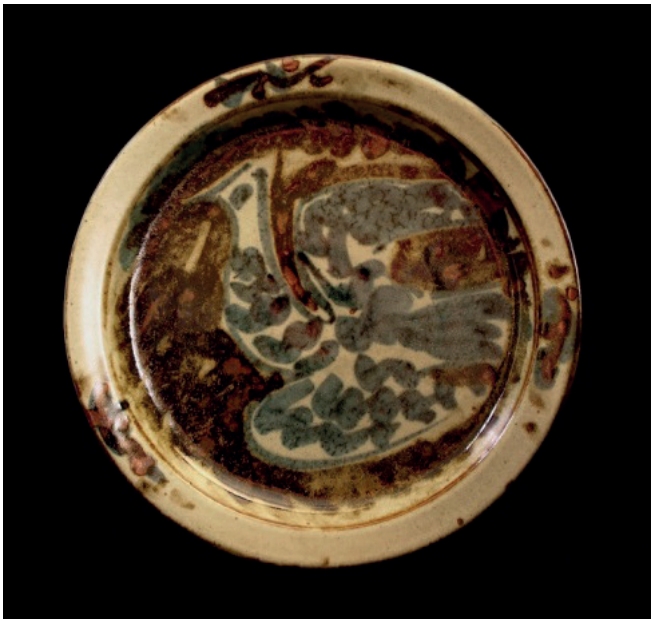

Figure 1: Esias Bosch, Charger (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware with cobalt and iron decoration, h. 4 cm x d. 35 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Figure 2: Hyme Rabinowitz, Pot stand (post-1962). Reduction-fired stoneware with a tenmoku glaze, h. 3.5 cm x d. 24 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Figure 3: Bryan Haden, Lidded jar (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware, tenmoku glaze and brushwork decoration, h. 42 cm x d. 22 cm. Collection of Barbara Levy. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Cardew was apprenticed to Leach's St. Ives studio in 1920, and Davis was appointed as a paid worker at St. Ives in 1933. Cardew left St. Ives in 1926 and Davis resigned in 1937. Both did so to establish their own studios. Cardew set up his studio, named the Winchcombe Pottery, in the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire. He later established a second studio in Cornwall, known as Wenford Bridge. Cardew's objective in establishing his own pottery was to "run [it] on traditional country pottery lines but meeting the needs of a contemporary audience and market" (Jones 2007, 24). Until 1939 when he established a second studio at Wenford Bridge in Cornwall, the pottery output included bread crocks, cider jars, pudding dishes and egg bakers, in which Jones (2007, 25) read "the robust handling of the clay with the marks of the thrower's hands left on the surface of the pot, the direct and lively decorative processes, the sheer vigour of the conception and execution of these extraordinary objects."

Cardew's one and only quest, according to the studio pottery historian Oliver Watson (1993, 12), was to produce utilitarian ware. He quotes Cardew's comments, that the potter's task was to make "domestic, useful, usable pottery, which is what pottery is all about […] Potters make things you can eat and drink from, in considerable quantities" (Watson 1993, 12). Cardew's style of work at Winchcombe showed his admiration for English country pottery, which was typically dipped in slip for decorative purposes before bisquing; finally, to be fired with lead-based earthenware glazes to create an impregnable and durable surface, which was then further decorated in different coloured slips[2] before being lead-glazed. A decoration could have been as simple as a finger swipe through the slip[3], sgraffito[4], brushwork or slip-trailing[5].

Cardew accepted an appointment in 1942 to manage the pottery at Achimota College in Ghana after his Wenford Bridge became unprofitable. He resigned the Achimota position three years later, and from 1945 to 1948, ran an independent pottery at Vurne-Dugarne on the River Volta in Ghana, which would turn out to be his third commercial studio failure. In 1950, Cardew headed for Nigeria, to take charge of the Pottery Training Centre in Abuja, which he ran with considerable success until 1965. This era of work in Nigeria saw Cardew switch from earthenware to stoneware, and his work accrued a stylistic African influence (Jones 2007, 116), coinciding with the first steps by Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden to establish their own studio potter careers. They would, in time, become familiar with both the ethics and aesthetics underpinning the distinctive Cardew ethos.

A bursary enabled Bosch to enrol in 1949 at the Central School of Art and Design in London (Bosch and De Waal 1988, 16) to study under Dora Billington (1890–1968), who headed the ceramics department. The course in pottery was geared towards training students as school craft teachers, but this held no appeal for Bosch. When Bosch expressed his wish to Billington to be a potter, she referred him to Raymond Finch at the Winchcombe Pottery (Bosch and De Waal 1988, 17), where Finch was left in charge during Cardew's time in Abuja. Bosch was accepted in 1950 as an apprentice but to gain further experience, he moved on to Cardew's studio at Wenford Bridge in mid-1952 (Bosch and De Waal 1988, 18). There, working alongside Cardew, who was home on leave from Abuja, he gained valuable experience in wood-firing and Cardew's "purist approach" of a strong discipline in producing quality work was imprinted on Bosch (Bosch and De Waal 1988, 20). In this time, he met Leach, Hamada and Yanagi, who came to visit the Wenford studio.

Bosch returned to South Africa in September 1952. For a brief period, he was employed at the Globe Potteries in Pretoria, where his job was to decorate earthenware

3 Slip is a liquid clay with the consistency of a thick cream (Savage and Newman 1974, 265).

4 Sgraffito is the technique of scratching off parts of one or more layers of underglazes or slips to create contrasting images, patterns or texture (Savage and Newman 1974, 261).

5 Slip-trailing is the application of a slip by means of a tube or nozzle to create a decoration (Savage and Newman 1974, 265).

ashtrays, vases and ornaments with "San" designs. He then served as Head of the Ceramics Department at the Technical College in Durban and used his free time to produce slip-glazed domestic earthenware in a backyard studio. The Durban public showed little enthusiasm for Bosch's pieces not because of their quality, but because of unfamiliarity with hand-thrown domestic ware, and the prevailing sentiment that only imported English pottery would be of an acceptable standard (Bosch and De Waal 1988, 23–24). His next appointment was as part-time lecturer in ceramics at the Pretoria Art School, which permitted Bosch to continue with his earthenware production in a studio in the city suburb of Hatfield. His range of work had expanded to also include vases, fruit bowls and tile panels. The decoration on some of those earthenware works (Figure 4) bore a striking resemblance to the combed, finger-brushed and trailed slip decorations with which he had become familiar at Winchcombe and which could be traced back to the decorations on Cardew's earlier English country pottery.

Figure 4: Esias Bosch, Dish (late 1950s). Earthenware with lead glaze, l. 50 cm x w. 35 cm (Bosch and de Waal 1988, 70). Collection of the Esias Bosch Estate. Photo courtesy of Andrée Bosch and Johann de Waal.

By 1960 when he had established himself as an earthenware studio potter of some repute, Bosch expressed serious interest in pursuing wood or oil-fired stoneware pottery. The year before, he was invited by Cardew to visit Nigeria, where they toured pottery workshops in Kano, Sokoto and Abuja. Bosch and Cardew would meet up again in 1968 when Cardew visited Bosch at his studio in White River.

The unfolding of Rabinowitz's career as studio potter is narrated in his unpublished memoir titled A Few Remembrances (n.d.). During a visit to England in 1956, he visited studio potteries in Cornwall and met Kenneth Quick (1931–1963) at his Tregenna Hill pottery studio in St. Ives. Quick was a former apprentice of Leach and encouraged Rabinowitz to apply for an apprenticeship under Leach. Leach did approve

the application, but Rabinowitz had other commitments and could not take up the apprenticeship. He did, however, accept an offer to work as a Quick's studio assistant for a six-month period and in this time was introduced to Cardew. In 1957, Rabinowitz made his way to Kano in Nigeria, where Cardew was setting up another training centre. He made no mention in his memoir of actually engaging in any studio pottery work whilst with Cardew in Nigeria.

The memoir narrates that Rabinowitz returned to South Africa late in 1957, and was offered studio space at Higgovale, where he built a wood-fired kiln. For a six-month period in 1961/1962, Rabinowitz worked as assistant to Bosch in White River and then returned to Cape Town to set up his final studio at Eagle's Nest. In 1996 Rabinowitz again visited England where Cardew, who by then had abandoned his work in Nigeria, agreed to take him on as assistant at Wenford Bridge. Cardew, as Rabinowitz (n.d., 39) recalled, did not teach but demanded of his students to observe, practice and "listen to his sophisticated opinions." Rabinowitz's link with Cardew was acknowledged when he was invited to exhibit his work along with 13 of Cardew's former pupils at a retrospective exhibition to honour Cardew that was hosted by the Beardsmore Galley in London in 1993. In press coverage of the event, Rabinowitz was described as the studio potter who "carried the [Cardew] tradition back to southern Africa" (*National Ceramics Quarterly* 1993, 11).

After four years of studying fine arts at the University of Natal, Haden set off to England in 1953 to visit potteries and secured a two-month long appointment with Davis at Crowan Pottery in Cornwall. Davis was formerly a thrower at Leach's St. Ives studio from 1933 to 1936, whereafter he took up the position of Head of the Art School at Achimota College, at which Cardew would succeed him. Davis wanted Haden to sign up for a five-year period of service at Crowan, but Haden declined the opportunity. On his return to South Africa, Haden established a studio at Hay Paddock in Pietermaritzburg to produce functional pieces of oxidised stoneware. He established his second studio on the family farm Bonnefoi in Mpumalanga Province in 1963, but one year later set off to work in stoneware at Aylesford Monastery Pottery in Kent where he threw Elizabethan-type ware including goblets, loving cups, cherubim pots and large holders for Holy Water. In 1965, he returned to South Africa to take up a teaching post at the Greenpoint Art Centre in Cape Town, and in the following year, he set up house and studio on the mountain slopes of Gordon's Bay.

Compared with Bosch and Rabinowitz, scant coverage was given of Haden's work in the *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* magazines, the former issued by the Association of Potters of South Africa and the latter by its successor Ceramics Southern Africa, and hence, little can be gleaned from those sources about the reception of his work. He suffered a stroke in 1997, which ended his studio pottery career. His style had little in common with those of Bosch and Rabinowitz and harkened back to the types of pottery in which he was trained in England.

Without distracting from the unique styles, they developed as they matured as studio potters, meanwhile taking into account their training and exposure to influences and their personal studio pottery philosophies, I deduce that Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden were more aligned with Cardew's philosophy than they were with Leach's. In the end, Leach, as individual standing apart from his studio, proved to be greater as an artist-potter than as a country production potter. Cardew, on the other hand, successfully merged art with craft production, an approach also clearly evident in the ethics of the South African pioneers.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the popular perception that Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden were steeped in the Anglo-Oriental tradition and that they were acolytes of Leach and exponents of his style, is an untenable one. During their studies and apprenticeships abroad, they were not groomed to work in any specific style. Whatever knowledge and experience they gained in England had to be matched with available materials and technology, as well as consumer preferences in South Africa. Their earlier studio pottery was produced for South African consumers who were not as familiar as the British with traditional functional wares. Such familiarity and support would have to be cultivated in South Africa, and that, along with appreciation for utilitarian pottery made by someone laying claim to being an artist-potter, would be a challenge that faced the pioneers as well as their successors.

The Second Generation of Studio Potters

The pioneers inspired a new generation of South African studio potters. The establishment of the Association of Potters of South Africa (APSA) in 1972 was testament to the proliferation in the numbers of potters seeking to emulate the work and achievements of the pioneers, either as professionals or as amateur potters. Within a short space of time, APSA had branches in Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and the Vaal Triangle (De Klerk 1997, 18). In-between the years of the pioneers setting up their permanent studios and towards the late 1980s, a large number of hobbyist potters flowed in and out of private pottery schools, either run as such, or as adjuncts to studio potteries.

The tertiary academic institutions which offered full-time instruction, diplomas and degrees in pottery or ceramics from the 1960s to the end of the century included the technikons of the Witwatersrand, Vaal Triangle, East London, Durban and Pretoria, the universities of the Witwatersrand, Natal, Pietermaritzburg, the Free State, and Port Elizabeth as well as the Paarl College (Ralph Johnson, Email message to author, August 26, 2016; Susan Sellschop, Email message to author, August 28, 2016). Liebermann Pottery in Johannesburg and the Kolonyama production studio in Lesotho offered a few opportunities for apprenticeships. New studio technology and "instant" materials made a direct contribution to the growth in numbers of studio potters and hobbyist potters. Electric kilns for the firing of earthenware and stoneware; low-temperature overglaze

and underglaze colours; prepared clays; and even a ready supply of a vast array of bisqueware, which eliminated the need to throw or slab anything, made pottery all that more appealing (David Schlapobersky, Email message to author, December 16, 2010).

APSA, craft galleries and shops, as well as formal art galleries, were active in hosting exhibitions of pottery and boosting public awareness, as well as cultivating an appreciation thereof in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The nucleus of a national collection of pottery came about in 1977, when Oude Libertas (Stellenbosch Farmers Winery) purchased some of the winning pieces as event sponsor of the national exhibition. Oude Libertas continued to add to the collection until 1982, when Corobrik took over the sponsorship and followed suit with expanding the collection. *The 1985 Yearbook of South African Ceramics* featured 119 "potters, craftsmen and artists," who received winning and highly commended awards at the 13 national exhibitions between the years 1973 and 1984 (Zaalberg 1985, 7).

The regional and national exhibitions from 1973 to the early 1980s were dominated by "artists working in the traditional manner" (Werth 1978, 5), whose works were mostly reduction-fired stoneware and usually utilitarian in nature. The *Ceramics '75* national exhibition drew comments of concern about the standard of execution from two of the judges, Mike Kamstra and Gordon Wales. Kamstra's (1975, 15) critique noted that: "the overall quality of the pieces submitted was mediocre […] It would appear that if potters have an eye for anything at all it is at most only for one aspect of their work at a time; it is either the glaze OR [sic] the shape of one section of the piece OR [sic] the inside OR [sic] the outside […] very few pieces were complete, resolved and integrated." Wales (1975, 17) penned an open letter to potters and referred to works at the exhibition, which in his opinion, fell short of even the most basic standards: "handles badly applied, goblets that would never stand with wine poured in, the overuse of corks on pots that called for lids, finish of the foot rim that would scratch any surface they were placed upon, pieces mounted on the most inappropriate backing, and worst of all, the unthoughtful use of glazes and design."

In the same year, the studio pottery and ceramics art historian Garth Clark (1975, 4) sounded the warning that South African potters had become totally preoccupied with Leach, Hamada, Yanagi and William Staite Morris who was a contemporary English studio potter of Leach, in their belief that the making of utilitarian wares was the only ceramic tradition. Clark highlighted the parallel practice, through the ages, of making clay objects which "always reflected their times in ritual, religious and decorative clay artifacts" and referred to the contemporary English ceramists' approach "where imagery supersedes craft" (Clark 1975, 4–6). By Wilma Cruise's (1991, 12) measure, the mid-1970s pottery lacked in "expressive manipulation of form and colour that challenged the restraint advocated by the Anglo-Japanese approach or the diluted concepts of the Arts and Crafts ideals […] Stylistic considerations were overlaid with moral dicta."

The negative reception of utilitarian pottery in general was bolstered by the emergence of the new ceramists who positioned themselves as artists rather than craftspeople, seeking to expand the boundaries of material, form, content and intent.

The trend towards a reinterpretation of pottery was first set in the United States of America during the 1950s and followed in Britain during the 1960s. At the root of the new approach were the individual ventures of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) in 1947, and Joan Miró (1893–1983) in 1953, to translate concepts captured in their painting in clay (Levin 1988, 196). The abstract expressionism for which Picasso and Miro set the tone was further explored and developed in clay by Peter Voulkos (1924–2002) in the United States of America. At the English schools of art, the shift from the pot to the vessel and sculptural forms was preceded by a period of experimentation, in which pottery was "an open-ended activity for which there were no fixed standards or preferred methods of making" (Jones 2000, n.p.).

The drive for creative expression in ceramic materials in South Africa was urged on by Malcolm P. MacIntyre-Read, who joined the ceramics department of the University of Natal in 1972. In his article "Colour Me Clay—Please" published in *Sgraffiti* (1976, 4), he challenged the prevailing adherence to materials, forms and colours, which he monikered "Hairy Brown Stoneware," that could on occasion introduce a "flash of green or deep red thrown in by [his mate] Happy Accident…" and would then elicit "choruses of eulogist falsetto gasps at the wonder of it all."[6] This satirical comment, wrote Cruise (1991, 13) "was regarded [as] nothing short of heretical" by the stoneware aesthetists of the time.

When ceramic works rapidly took centre stage at the regional and national exhibitions in the 1980s, some of the potters and supporters of their style of work grew vocal in their criticism of such prominence. The Cape Town-based studio potter Steve Shapiro (1987, 5) reviewed the 1987 national exhibition, and lamented the "measure of success achieved by the ceramicists in their relentless campaign to drive the potters to some dark places where presumably tenmoku is the colour and function is the purpose."

The leading figures among the second generation of studio potters included Tim Morris (1941–1990), Andrew Walford, Ian Glenny, Digby Hoets and the partnership of David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter. They had in common the establishment of distinctive oeuvres in which stylistic and ideological influences can be read, but which became fused with their personal interpretations and expressions of pottery. They anchored the tradition of hand-made utilitarian pottery in South Africa, but also produced one-off ornamental works. They were either self-taught, served pottery studio apprenticeships, had some training at the informal pottery schools, or were graduates of the pottery and ceramic departments at tertiary institutions. Their successful participation in national and regional competitions as well as their exposure at South African and international galleries boosted their professional profiles.

Though none of them ever claimed to be an "Anglo-Orientalist," they would repeatedly be described in publications as exponents of the Anglo-Oriental tradition.

6 The reference to "Hairy Brown Stoneware" relates to the popular dark brown tenmoku glaze which produces streaks of brown or black in a pattern suggestive of fur and hence also known as "hare's fur glaze" (Rhodes 1973, 289).

In her book *Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa*, Cruise grouped Walford, Glenny, Rabinowitz, Haden, Shapiro, Yvonne Levy and Joel Sibisi as being representative of that tradition (1991, 6). In John Steele's (2015, 123) *Anton and Vale van der Merwe: Reinterpreting Afro-Oriental Studio Ceramics Traditions in South Africa*, he named Bosch, Rabinowitz, Haden, Morris and Walford as "amongst the founding fathers of reinterpretation of Anglo-Oriental principles." He also listed a group of studio potters who "in unique ways […] have worked in an Anglo-Oriental tradition that has become transformed into a local Afro-Oriental blend," which from the 1970s onwards included Van der Merwe, Barbara Robinson, Lindsay Scott, Glenny, David Walters, the partnership of Schlapobersky and Potter, Hoets, Shapiro, Graham Bolland, Yogi de Beer, Paul de Jongh, John Ellis, Christo Giles, Nico Liebenberg, Garth Meyer, Patton, Vale van der Merwe, and to some extent also Steele himself. Steele made his selection on the grounds that the potters showed an "implementation of some Oriental ethos" (2015, 129) and that "many of the *mingei* tenets remained as grounding philosophy" (2015, 133).

Walters (Email message to author, December 16, 2010), a graduate of the University of Natal, reflected that:

> [P]eople like Morris, Rabinowitz, Bosch—even me, to an extent—received the Anglo Oriental "feel" secondhand, so to speak. The traditions brought to the pottery world by Leach et al., had already become a part of the "language" of clay by the time we came along. I am not sure how conscious we were of that influence—we were thoroughly aware of it, of course, but I don't picture myself in a bamboo grove on Mount Fuji.

Morris, whose oeuvre was characterised by wheel-thrown, reduction-fired utilitarian and ornamental wares, but who also excelled in hand-built pieces, studied pottery at the Central School of Art in London, where he graduated in 1964 (Figure 5). Sellschop (2008) pointed out that though Morris was trained with the skills and understanding to produce high temperature ceramics that followed the aesthetics of the Anglo-Oriental tradition, he showed more interest in the contemporary English art styles of the 1960s. But she noted that he "realised that he could build a stable career from working in high-fired stoneware and porcelain, making utilitarian wares that were still in style in South Africa at that time."

Figure 5: Tim Morris, Bowl (1970s). Reduction-fired stoneware with decoration in iron oxide, h 5 cm x w. 23 cm. Collection of Barry and Claudia Oliphant. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Hoets set aside his production of utilitarian wares in 1983 to pursue the making of very large pots more suitable for architectural and landscape ornamentation. From 1973 to 1976, he produced a range of utilitarian wares at his studio in Johannesburg, and from 1976 onwards at his studio in Halfway House. These earlier utilitarian wares, according to the artist and art critic Gregory John Kerr (1984), confirmed Hoets as "a direct descendant of [the] fusing of [Anglo-Oriental] traditional functionalism and the personalized, individual 'statement'" (Kerr 1984, 28). Hoets's clean forms and crisp decorations set his work apart from the utilitarian wares produced by his studio potter peers. He did attempt a more painterly style of decoration for his reduction-fired stoneware. Kerr (1984, 23) saw in that "a deference to the decorating techniques traditionally associated with reduction firing," which gave Hoets's pots a "somewhat 'Japanese' quality." He later abandoned brushwork decoration in a quasi-Oriental style, in favour of poured slips, which he combed into low relief patterns (Cruise 1981, 12), and then progressed to stencils of graphic designs which he applied with sprayed glazes (Figure 6).

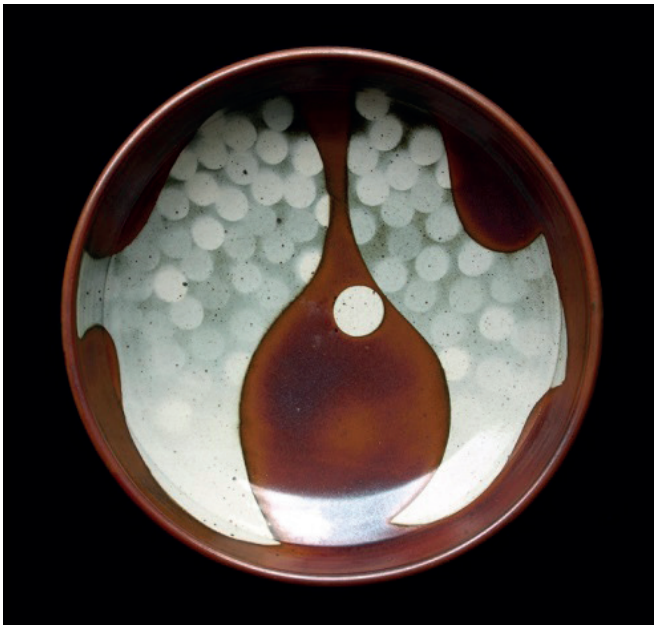

Figure 6: Digby Hoets, Bowl (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware with a glaze made from porcelain clay and whiting and the decoration in iron and iron and cobalt oxides sprayed in layers, h. 20.5 cm x w. 51.5 cm. Collection of Barry and Claudia Oliphant. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Glenny enrolled at the Natal Technikon to study fine art but did not complete his diploma. He set up his first pottery studio in Durban but then opted to relocate to Dargle in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands in 1976. In an interview in 2010, he declared his admiration for Leach and the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery (Figure 7). In his estimation, he met the tenets of the Anglo-Oriental tradition and of the *mingei* folk craft movement. That, however, did not imply that he purposefully aspired to be an Anglo-Oriental traditionalist: "I went for traditional English ceramics… with a little bit of Oriental… domestic ware... saleable, so that I could make a buck out of it. I didn't want to be a starving artist" (Glenny 2010). When interviewed for Cruise's book *Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa*, Glenny equated himself with "the artist-craftsmen in the *mingei*-tradition" (Cruise 1991, 44).

Figure 7: Ian Glenny, Tea bowl (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware, tenmoku glaze with wax-resist decoration, h. 9 cm x d. 10 cm. Collection of Greg Gamble and Philippe van der Merwe. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Named Bukkenburg, the Swellendam-based studio pottery of Schlapobersky and Potter was founded in 1996 but is preceded by more than 20 years of work in Johannesburg, where they had studios in Halfway House, Parkwood and Parkview. Schlapobersky throws the pots, and Potter then does the decorating (Figure 8). Apart from a few pottery lessons at the hands of Gordon Wales, they were mentored by Morris, from whom they learned the discipline of repetitive throwing to master form. The Bukkenburg output is primarily utilitarian and the wares are created with the intention of finding a meaningful and relevant place and context in their destined environments: "Our role is to add good art and craft, and usefulness to daily life because people seem still to have a desire for that in their lives, more especially if they have something of the background and an understanding of the work" (David Schlapobersky, Email message to author, December 16, 2010). His reference to "background," explained Schlapobersky (Email message to author, August 30, 2015)**,** was a reference to following the tradition of materials and process as espoused by "Leach and his followers." Cruise saw in this a direct parallel with "the pastoral ideologies of Leach and Cardew" (1991, 68) and the Anglo-Oriental tradition that held that the finished product was merely a part of the whole (1991, 41).

Figure 8: David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter, Charger (2010). Stoneware with tenmoku glaze, h. 4 cm x d. 44 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Walford attended the Durban Art School in 1959, but the training did not meet his expectations. He then enrolled as apprentice with the Walsh-Marais Pottery, followed by an apprenticeship at the Liebermann Pottery Studio in 1959. He was invited in 1964 to work at the Gustavsberg Studio in Sweden, which specialised in the production of porcelain ware. In the following year he went to Germany, where he established a studio, whilst teaching at the Hamburg Art Academy. Earlier he had met Lucie Rie (1902–1995), Leach and Cardew on a visit to Britain, and in 1969 he visited Hamada in Japan. On his return to South Africa, he established his studio in Shongweni, KwaZulu-Natal. Clark and Wagner (1974, 188) saw little evidence of any Scandinavian influence in his work of the early 1970s but recognised the Japanese and Korean pottery philosophy in his oeuvre. Walford (2010) explained that it was only because he was solidly grounded in technique, materials and processes, that he could selectively introduce elements of other schools and styles of pottery. He has been firmly cast as an exponent of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery, most likely because of the combination of his production of reduction-fired utilitarian ware, similarities with the aesthetics of Japanese and Korean pottery and in particular his brushwork decorations, his choice of materials, his studio processes, and his following of the Zen philosophy (Figure 9). When interviewed in 2010 about his relationship with the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery, he stated that he did not object to being branded as the flag-bearer of

that tradition but had reservations about its validity: “I am wearing the shoes and they pinch [...] describing me as Anglo-Oriental is a bit like playing calypso on the violin” (Walford 2010).

Figure 9: Andrew Walford, Slabbed bottle (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware with a wax-resist iron oxide decoration under a white glaze, h. 36 cm x w. 12 cm. Formerly in the collection of Tim Morris. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

The ‘Anglo-Oriental’ Epithet—Retrospective Views and Considerations of An Alternative Identity for the South African Studio Pottery of the Later Twentieth Century

In 2015 as part of my field research, some eminent studio pottery and ceramics personalities were invited to review and qualify the assigning of the “Anglo-Oriental” epithet to South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century.

Cruise (2015) maintains that it was valid:

> I think that up to the 80s and early 90s, Anglo-Orientalism was a kind of dominant ideology, which more or less took over the studio pottery movement and held it in its claw […] it was a thing that we all aspired to [...] we all wanted to be an Esias Bosch or Andrew Walford and whoever else was doing it at that time.

She makes the point that those who followed in the footsteps of the pioneer studio potters took on the "outward trappings" of their work but neglected to come to understand their underpinning philosophies (Cruise 2015). Walters (2015a) and Johnson (2015) concur that there was not a full understanding of that which constituted the Anglo-Oriental tradition. According to Johnson (2015) the nuances in the expression of that tradition were not recognised, and hence "because there was some kind of resemblance [to the Anglo-Oriental tradition], it was presumed to be 'Anglo-Oriental'." In Marais's (2015) view, the Anglo-Oriental tradition in South Africa in the 1970s "was the only movement with currency". On that point Walters (2015a), differs from Marais and says that South Africa's pottery history was not linear: "we did not take Anglo-Orientalism lock stock and barrel." Schlapobersky (2015) describes himself and his partner Potter as "grateful beneficiaries" of "at least some of [the] legacy" of the Anglo-Oriental tradition. Cruise (2015) acknowledges that a Scandinavian influence came via Walford and that English country and English modern pottery influences were transmitted in the oeuvres of Morris and Patton. In Hoets's (2015) opinion, there is a need to consider the influence of English industrial pottery production via the potters who trained and worked in that industry and then came to South Africa as pottery teachers.

Steele (2015) makes an important distinction between the slavish following of the Anglo-Oriental tradition and the interpretation thereof:

> [I]t is likely that even some of the original "tenets and aesthetics of the Anglo-Oriental school of studio pottery" may well have been variable, depending on circumstances, yet were coherent enough to warrant becoming known as an Anglo-Oriental way of thinking underlying studio practice, despite reinterpretations according to own personalities, raw materials, creative impulses, financial and other constraints, as well as personal and collective circumstances and agendas. Thus, just as the likes of Cardew and so on consolidated what has become known as the Anglo-Oriental tradition in ways that suited their own personalities, so too did first-generation South African studio potters Bosch, [Hyme] Rabinowitz, [Bryan] Haden, Morris and Andrew Walford. […] Thus, I think it is wise to differentiate between various Anglo-Oriental influences and unique uptakes thereof in the Southern African situation, thereby avoiding a potential pitfall of lumping a group of potters together without recognising unique individualities.

If the issue of an "Anglo-Oriental" identity cannot be conclusively proven, then the question arises whether the origin, forms and decorative elements of South African studio pottery merit a naming which would establish a distinctive collective identity and a definite link to South Africa or Africa.

As early as 1960 (van Biljon 1960, 262), there was an awareness that the South African studio potters were reflecting their personal perceptions in their work which could be read in their choice of colours and illustrations. In an article in *Ceramic Review*,

Cruise (2002, 34) described Hoets's pots as "[taking] on the colours of the veld; the grey-greens of the hardwood trees, the ochres, browns and washed out textures of a winter on the highveld." Haden (2010) spoke of his portrayal of the Bonnefoi landscapes, veld flora and vlei weeds. In Walford's artist's statement on his online studiopottery.co.uk member profile page, mention is made of the "natural colours on the pots [which] are reminiscent of reflecting afternoon sun and shadows on the cliffs rising steeply next to his home" (studiopottery.co.uk, n.d.). Schoonraad (1988, 22) was in no doubt that Bosch's work showed that it was rooted in Africa:

> Although his art can be labelled as international, it is rooted deeply in Africa. His green glazes were once described as being reminiscent of the Knysna forests; his browns can be compared to the different hues of a newly ploughed field on the highveld. All his colours are toned to look as though they are baked in the African sun. His art has the solidity of this great continent and his rich colours reflect this ageless land.

Kirk (1979, 42) found symbols of South Africa in Bosch's work:

> The veld flowers, grasses, doves, tortoises and lizards which appear so often as simple decorative motifs reflect his South African environment. The octagonal warm brown slab pots are reminiscent of sturdy red-ochre smeared African huts. The scraffito striations upon the upper surfaces seem to draw recollection from thatched roofs and mud walls. The sun, cloud and bird symbols of his murals recollect child schema as much as commercial symbols for a wall reflecting light and space.

Van Biljon (1960, 262) stated as early as 1960 that though Bosch's work was "international," she recognised the "rich, dark atmosphere" of Africa in his choice of colours. She added that when he used paler colours, they appear to have been "bleached by the fell African sun."

An example of the pot forms of Bosch, which suggests a strong association with Africa is his interpretation of Cardew's *Gwari* casserole (Figure 10). Cardew described this form, which he found in Nigeria, as having the very essence of Africa. He produced *Gwari* casseroles with two or three handles, but they seldom varied in their form of a pot with a rotund belly, of which the upper edge was at times decorated with a pinched design, a neck with a flared rim, and a handled lid. In Bosch's version, the *Gwari* casserole became an open, three-handled jar, with a distinctly similar belly embellished and pinch-decorated edge, the neck ending in a flared rim (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Michael Cardew, *Gwari* casserole (post-1965). Reduction fired stoneware with Wenford Bridge and potter's personal marks, glaze data unknown, h. 25 cm x d. 32 cm. Collection of Aberystwyth University. Photo courtesy of Aberystwyth University School of Art Museum and Galleries.

Figure 11: Esias Bosch, Jar (mid-1970s). Reduction-fired stoneware with iron glaze, h. 35 cm (Bosch and de Waal 1988, 79). Collection of the Esias Bosch Estate. Photo courtesy of Andrée Bosch and Johann de Waal.

The earlier commentators do not appear to have made any great issue of the influences of indigenous cultural pottery in establishing an "African" or "South African" identity in the oeuvres of the studio potters. Writing in 1974, Clark and Wagner (1974, 11) were in fact dismissive of such influences: "Tribal African pottery, attractive as it is, has

understandably not had much effect or influence on any of the White potters, as the culture is alien and the work aesthetically and technically limited." By 1983, however, Cohen (1983, 13) saw adopted features of African pottery in the forms and decorations of works at that year's national ceramics exhibition: "a great deal of the work had formed a strong indigenous flavour, for it seemed reminiscent of ethnic pottery […] and a style of decoration that derives from tribal designs and local ways of working clay."

For Calder (2010), the ways in which Rabinowitz and Bosch developed their materials, technique, form and decoration, served to emphasise that they succeeded in establishing "a working visual vocabulary—an idiom—of [South African] ceramics." It is important to note that neither Bosch, Rabinowitz nor Haden ever made a formal claim that they produced pottery with a "South African" or "African" character or identity. Bosch, according to Kirk (1979, 42) assimilated and applied symbols and their meanings to fit purpose. Kirk made specific mention of "the forms and symbols, the patterns and the meanings of the Oriental, European and African traditions" (1979, 42).

Johnson (2015) recalls that when the Kenyan-born British ceramicist Magdalene Odundo whose contemporary interpretations of African pottery are highly acclaimed, adjudicated at the 2014 national exhibition, she remarked that she could have seen any of the works on display anywhere else in the world. Marais (2015) dismisses any attempt to attribute a South African or African epithet to contemporary pottery/ceramics, with her comment that although there is an African influence, the expressions of the works are too varied and that "one size does not fit all." In Walters's (2015) view, the "polyglot of influences" to which South Africa's potters/ceramists are receptive, discourages working towards the building of such an image. The potters/ceramists, says Johnson (2015), have also shown correctness of restraint in appropriating elements of African identity and avoiding the pitfall of lapsing into "derivatives of African craft."

Conclusion

The overall character of South African pottery in the later twentieth century was dominated by utilitarian wares in repetitive forms and decorations, and not necessarily with faultless technical features. "Anglo-Oriental" was generally used to describe a style of pottery that was utilitarian-orientated and created by potters who subscribed to a craft ethos. Its critics, notably those amongst the post-modern ceramists, liberally used the same epithet to dismiss the pottery as unimaginative and trapped in traditional forms and practices.

The manner and intent with which the epithet was applied in the later twentieth century suggested that South African studio potters were captured *en masse* by the philosophies of Leach and Yanagi and produced works which were distinctly "Anglo-Oriental" in style. There was in fact never a distinctive archetype of an Anglo-Oriental studio pottery style, but at best, many forms of expression of the ethics and aesthetics of the Anglo-Oriental tradition's philosophy, for example, to be handmade, of simple but

elegant form and to serve a function. It is acknowledged that some of the Anglo-Oriental tradition's tenets were reflected in the hand-making of mostly utilitarian wares in rural-based studios, working with self-sourced materials, and achieving their mastery of form through repetitive throwing. Considered individually, those tenets could be associated with many other pottery traditions, but by directly linking them, the Anglo-Oriental tradition became established as a working *philosophy* as opposed to a *practice*.

Any alternative epithet suggesting a linkage of whatever nature to the Anglo-Oriental tradition would be invalid. "Anglo-Oriental-inspired," "rooted in the Anglo-Oriental tradition," "Anglo-Oriental-derived" and "quasi-Anglo-Oriental" would be a perpetuation of a forced association. If any link to the Anglo-Oriental tradition must be acknowledged, then my assertion is that such a relationship would not stretch beyond the selection of (mostly) natural materials, forms to fit the purpose, the presence of the potter's hand in all of the processes and, in the words of Schlapobersky (2015), the creation of a lifestyle "around the rhythms of [a] working studio."

Despite comments that some of the South African studio potters of the later twentieth century reflected their natural environments in their works (Figures 12, 13 and 14), there is no justification for a distinctive naming for South African studio pottery to unambiguously link it to a geographical region or culture. Naming it "South African" or "African" (or "Afro") risks being challenged on the grounds that the studio potters were schooled in Western pottery technology and aesthetics and produced forms not traditionally associated with indigenous cultures. Labels such as "New Zealand pottery," "Australian pottery" and "American pottery" do not describe that pottery as being distinctive of those countries, but merely denote provenance. The forms of studio pottery in those countries are more expansive than geographic- or culture-specific. The very same applies to South African studio pottery.

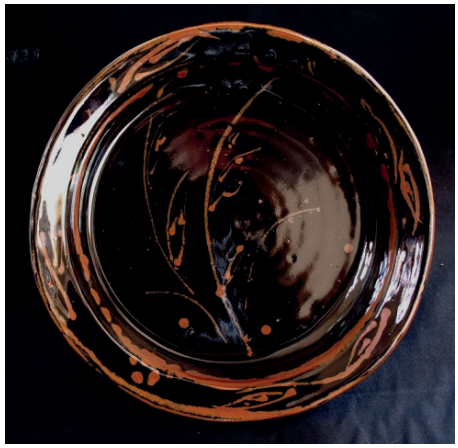

Figure 12: Hyme Rabinowitz, Bowl (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware, tenmoku glaze with brushed and slip-trailed decoration, h. 5 cm x d. 22 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

Figure 13: Chris Green, Lidded jar (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware with celadon and iron glazes and iron and rutile oxides, h. 24 cm x d. 18 cm. Collection of the William Humphreys Art Gallery. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

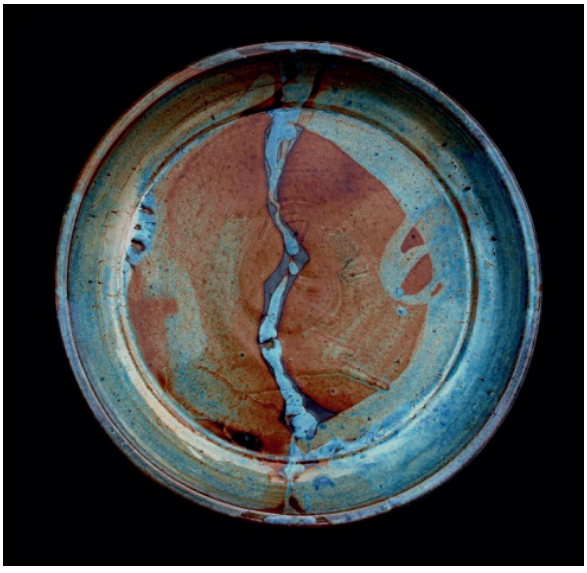

Figure 14: Steve Shapiro, Charger (1980s). Reduction-fired stoneware with titanium dioxide poured over an iron-saturated glaze, h. 7 cm x d. 54 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt. Photograph by Ronnie Watt.

The South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century should be acknowledged for precisely what it is: an expression of mostly utilitarian pottery forms reflecting many influences but not dominated by any single pottery tradition. When that studio pottery is measured only against sign values (form, material, decoration, manufacturing process, etc.) and without due recognition of contextual meaning, then it must be considered that the "Anglo-Oriental" epithet discriminates against the individual studio potters and their oeuvres, as well as against the collective genre of South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century.

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